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P. Allen
11/07/02

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE

IN RE APPLICATION OF:

SAKAE ISHIKAWA ET AL. : GROUP ART UNIT: 3653

SERIAL NO: 09/848,764 :

FILED: MAY 4, 2001 : EXAMINER: BUTLER, M.

FOR: METHOD OF AND SYSTEM FOR MANAGING RACK OPERATION, METHOD
OF AND SYSTEM FOR MANAGING MULTISTAGE RACK, . . .

PROVISIONAL ELECTION OF SPECIES

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20231

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In response to the Restriction requirement dated October, 2, 2002, Applicants elect Invention I, Claims 1-38 and provisionally elect species I of Figure 4 for examination on the merits, and identify Claims 1-11 as reading on the elected species. However, Applicants respectfully disagree with the Official Action's assertion that there are no generic claims and there are the five embodiments included in the present application. In fact, the present application includes four embodiments. The first embodiment relates to simultaneously carrying out delivery of a new product and collection of an old product. The second embodiment relates to carrying out delivery of a new product and collection of an old product at different times. The third embodiment relates to carrying out delivery of a certain type of product and collection of another type of product. The fourth embodiment relates to delivery and collection of products manufactured at different locations. Moreover, Applicants submit that Claim 1 is generic to all of these embodiments. Applicants submit, therefore, that if

generic Claim 1 is allowed, Claims 12-38, although non-elected, should also be allowed.¹

In addition, Applicants respectfully traverse the election of species requirement for several key reasons.

First, the outstanding Official Action merely includes the conclusory statement that "the application contains claims directed to ... patentably distinct species ..." without stating any basis whatsoever in support of such a finding. This is in violation of MPEP §816, which states:

MPEP §816

The particular reasons relied on by the examiner for holding the inventions as claimed are either independent or distinct should be concisely stated. A mere statement of conclusion is inadequate. The reasons upon which the conclusion is based should be given. ...

In the absence of any annunciated basis, it is respectfully submitted that the PTO clearly has not carried forward its burden of proof to establish distinctness.

Secondly, MPEP § 806.04(f) requires:

MPEP § 806.04(f)

Claims to be restricted to different species must be mutually exclusive...

The outstanding Official Action fails to address in any way whether the pending claims recite mutually exclusive characteristics. Applicants therefore further traverse the outstanding election requierment on that basis.

Finally, MPEP § 803 states:

MPEP § 803

¹See MPEP §806.04(d).

... If the search and examination of an entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions.

However, the outstanding Restriction Requirement has not established that an undue burden would exist if the Restriction Requirement was not issued and all the claims were examined together. Moreover, the claims of the present invention would appear to be part of an overlapping search area. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully also traverse the outstanding Election requirement on the grounds that a search and examination of the entire application would not place a *serious* burden on the Examiner.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the requirement to elect a single species be withdrawn, and that a full examination on the merits of Claims 1-38 be conducted.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.



Gregory J. Maier
Registration No. 25,599
Attorney of Record
Edwin D. Garlepp
Registration No. 45,330



22850

(703) 413-3000
Fax #: (703) 413-2220
GJM:EDG:eac

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OBLON
SPIVAK
McCLELLAND
MAIER
&
NEUSTADT
P.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

GREGORY J. MAIER
(703) 413-3000
GMAIER@OBLON.COM

EDWIN D. GARLEPP
SENIOR ASSOCIATE
(703) 413-3000
EGARLEPP@OBLON.COM

SIR:

Attached hereto for filing are the following papers:

PROVISIONAL ELECTION OF SPECIES

Our check in the amount of \$ --0-- is attached covering any required fees. In the event that any variance exists between the amount enclosed and the Patent Office charges for filing the above-noted documents, including any fees required under 37 CFR 1.136 for any necessary Extension of Time to make the filing of the attached documents timely, please charge or credit our Deposit Account No. 15-0030. Further, if these papers are not considered timely filed, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 for the necessary extension of time. A duplicate copy of this sheet is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Gregory J. Maier
Attorney of Record
Registration No. 25,599
Edwin D. Garlepp
Registration No. 45,330



22850

Tel. No.: (703) 413-3000
Fax No.: (703) 413-2220
GJM:EDG:eac